



SERVICE SOURCE

New Jersey's National and Community Service Program and Policy Review
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NJ State Commission Awarded Homeland Security Grant

New Jersey has received a federal grant of \$248,000 to support AmeriCorps members and other volunteers in public safety, public health, emergency response and disaster preparedness efforts statewide. This new initiative was created to help meet the President's goal of involving Americans in the war on terror. The program's mission is simple: fostering more effective service for people affected by disaster.

"The times we live in have expanded our definition of community service to include activities designed to deter and prevent actions that threaten the safety of our homes and neighborhoods," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera. "This grant will help our state strengthen its efforts to keep its citizens safe and secure from harm." NJ is one of 43 grant recipients nationwide to share \$10.3 million in competitive Homeland Security Grants.

In a speech before the grantees, Leslie Lenkowsky, CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service spoke about the importance of effectively organizing citizen action. "Let me cite one example, well-known to those of you from New Jersey. After the planes struck the World Trade Center, hundreds, if not thousands, of Garden State residents headed toward Ground Zero to help. Many went right to work, assisting the hard-pressed 'first responders.' But many also found themselves without clear guidance about what was needed or where they could best serve," he added.

"Our nation's borders are no longer as safe as we once thought they were. . . .," said Governor James E. McGreevey. "We must do more to ensure that our ports are inviolable, and our communities and homes safe."

The AmeriCorps members are expected to organize educational outreach programs in the county, including training in public health, family preparedness, volunteerism and donations management. The initiative will develop a statewide database and communications mechanism in its first year. For information contact Rowena Madden at 609-633-9627.

INTEGRATION OF AMERICORPS MEMBERS WITH DISABILITIES IS A TOP PRIORITY

New Jersey AmeriCorps Programs are making a concerted effort to promote AmeriCorps to people with disabilities. "Traditionally, high school students have been given two

choices, either work or school," said Sherry Mahfouz, AmeriCorps Program Officer. "Over the next year we will promote AmeriCorps as a career exploration to students with

disabilities, making sure they are included in our programs and their needs are being met." For information about this initiative contact Sherry Mahfouz at 609-633-9627.

Hoboken School District Offers New Program as a Result of 9/11

The district, one of last year's Learn & Serve America grantees, has put together an emergency management team composed of high school juniors and seniors. The teams have worked during torrential rains and extreme heat, when senior citizens in need of supplies and medications have been unable to leave their homes.

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Homeland Security

AmeriCorps members, NJ Promise Fellows, and school volunteers distributed Potassium Iodide tablets to members of the South Jersey communities located within 10 miles of nuclear power plants. This was in partnership with the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services.

NEW READING PROGRAM

The Reading Partners Program (RPP) is an innovative, cross-age reading program to improve the reading level of kindergarten through third grade students. The goal is to assist children to read independently by the third grade.

RPP is locally developed and implemented. It is an AmeriCorps program that is funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

A pilot program is in effect in three of the eight elementary schools in the Linden School District. High school students are being trained by AmeriCorps members in providing tutoring, mentoring and reading assistance to K-3 students. They are working in four school districts.

The program is an important one for



“Associated Press wondered what would happen if we could shrink the world’s population into a village of 100 people. If all existing conditions remained the same ONLY 30 people would be able to read.”

this school district due to the large number of Haitian and Latino immigrants living here,” said Michele Hewson, program director. “These children do not get the support they need at home since their parents are not fluent in English and are unable to help them with their schoolwork.”

Hewson would like to see a team set up in each elementary school composed of teachers, AmeriCorps members, and members of the community. In addition, she would like to see the program expand from three schools to all eight elementary schools in the district. The program concludes May 31.

Two additional programs are starting in Stafford and Lakewood Township School Districts. A third program will be run by Golden Gate Inc. in Sewell. Golden Gate is a nonprofit organization that works in the schools.

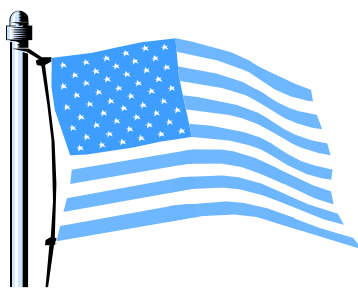
9/11 Remembered

With poems, songs and candlelight vigils, the greater New Jersey area paid tribute to those who died in the terrorist attacks of September 11. AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve members took part in numerous events to remember the victims and to honor those who served their fellow men and women during that tragic day and the days that followed.

AMERICORPS PROGRAMS

International Institute of New Jersey in Jersey City put on a play titled *In Each Other’s Eyes* Oct. 2 at the Liberty Science Center. During the play, clients from the Institute acted out life stories about living in America in a diverse community. This was woven together in play, music and dance.

NJ Community Development Corp put together a Power Point presentation focusing on the racial, cultural and ethnic differences in



the members of the Paterson community. The presentation will be used interactively with schools and community groups.

LEARN AND SERVE ACTIVITIES:

Bloomfield Public Schools, organized a color card display on the field where the entire high school student body created an American flag.

An aerial photograph was taken which was made into a poster size photo to sell to benefit Camp Haze, a summer camp program created for children whose parents were lost on September 11. Camp Haze was created in memory of Scott Hazelhorn of Springfield, a victim of the September 11 tragedy.

In the Spotlight

Jeffrey Vega, President of New Brunswick Tomorrow (NBT), has been appointed Chair of the NJ Commission on National and Community Service. NBT is a private, non-profit agency that addresses social-service issues. Jeff also has experience with nonprofit agencies as a strategic planner at the Center for Nonprofit Corporations in Princeton.

A doctoral student at the Bloustein School for Public Policy at Rutgers, Jeff said, "I think the mission of my job and AmeriCorps, to improve the quality of life for people, is also my professional and personal mission."

In his work with the commission, Jeffrey has focused on strategic planning and evaluation of AmeriCorps programs.

Some of his recent accomplishments with NBT include implementing a \$4 million employment and training program to serve the unemployed; developing youth programs that deal with employment before-and after-school services; and working with agencies to develop an asset accumulation strategy for low-income individuals.

NJ's 1st Statewide Conference



Days to Remember

New Jersey's first statewide conference on national and community service was held May 9-10, 2002 in Atlantic City. The conference provided training and professional development opportunities through a series of workshops and nationally recognized speakers.

The conference brought together representatives from all areas of national service (AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, and the Senior Service Corps) along with the volunteer community, schools and colleges, the corporate sector, foundations, and community-based organizations.

The keynote speaker was Rosie K. Mauk, Director of AmeriCorps for the Corporation for National and Community Service. Ms. Mauk, is a longtime champion of volunteer service on the state and national levels. Her appointment has coincided with a time of intense interest in AmeriCorps and homeland security. "Since September 11, our nation has seen a tremendous outpouring of patriotism and civic pride, and people are asking what more they can do," said Mauk. "For many, we hope the answer is AmeriCorps."



Pictured here with Rosie Mauk are (from left to right) Robert Goodwin, President and CEO of the Points of Light Foundation and Jeffrey Vega. See story above.

AmeriCorps Training and Special Events Calendar (Dates are subject to change)

State Theatre Workshops

Various/Per Brochure

April 28-29, May 12

Facilitation Skills/Conducting Reflection Sessions May 2

End-of-Year Event

(Statewide Reflection and Recognition Event for All Corpsmembers/Commission Meeting in PM) (tentative) May 30

Program Managers' "Starting Strong" Orientation Retreat

August 25-28

Launch

October 24

For further information about training events, contact Donna Teel-Drake at 609-777-4613.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY

The 12th Annual Make a Difference Day October 26 involved more than three million participants nationwide. The outpouring of neighborliness and good deeds came from groups ranging from college students to overseas soldiers, White House staff to country singers, and corporate bankers to children. Add them up and they form the largest day of community service in the world.

From Camden to Paterson, several hundred projects took place on Make a Difference Day in New Jersey. AmeriCorps members and Learn & Serve grantees joined other organizations across the country in planning projects that would make a difference.

Here are a few highlights:

Camden and Trenton:

The Cooper Lanning Civic Association, the NJ Department of Environmental Protection – NJ Watershed Ambassador's Program in Trenton, and the NJ Tree Foundation, participated in the group's annual tree planting and educational project in locations throughout the state. The groups planted over 5,000 trees statewide.

Ewing:

Helping Hands Club, Anthel Elementary School, collected money for UNICEF to aid in the fight against polio in under-developed countries.



Princeton, Montclair, New Brunswick, Rutgers, Camden, Stockton, Paterson:

A+ for Kids Teachers Network and the NJ Community Water Watch, NJ Public Interest Research Group organized river cleanups with student groups at colleges throughout the state. The cleanups were part of the Clean Ocean Action Beach Sweep event, which occurred at various sites up and down the coast.

Little Ferry:

Students of Little Ferry School District cleaned up the litter and debris and cut back the overgrowth at Losen Slote State Park. The site will serve as a living biology and chemistry laboratory providing hands-on learning experiences for middle school science students.

AmeriCorps Launch Dedicates Ninth Year to "Global Issues. . . Local Action"

New Jersey AmeriCorps members began a new season of service October 19 with a swearing-in ceremony in the General Assembly Chamber of the State House in Trenton. More than 300 AmeriCorps members pledged their commitment to serve New Jersey's communities during a program launching the new year of service. "AmeriCorps has proven itself over the years to be a vital program that has created many opportunities for people to serve their communities," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera. "I wish our newest members well as they begin their projects to improve the quality of life for all of us."

This year marks nine years of AmeriCorps service in New Jersey and will be dedicated to the theme of "Global Issues . . . Local Action." Highlighting this theme was a project called the Trenton Backpack Challenge. In this program, AmeriCorps members assembled age-appropriate backpacks for children in foster care. The sponsor of the backpack challenge, Prudential Insurance Company of America, was recognized for its contributions. Gabriella Morris, president of the Prudential Foundation and vice-president of Community Resources of Prudential Financial Inc., spoke of her organization's commitment to the community and thanked the AmeriCorps members for their part in the project.

Jeffrey Vega, Chair of the NJ Commission on National and Community Service, commended the AmeriCorps members for making a commitment for a year of service. "We are proud of the talents and dedication that you are bringing to the citizens of New Jersey," he said. "At a time when our country is challenged to be compassionate and patriotic, you set an example for us all."

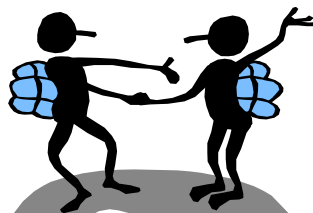
CAMARADERIE AND INSPIRATION AT LEADERSHIP RETREAT

Twenty strangers were picked or volunteered to attend the AmeriCorps Leadership Institute for two nights and three days of training. We knew only that we were there to enhance our skills as leaders and to learn about Dr. Martin Luther King, a true leader. The rest would fall into place. That was evident as the first icebreaker got under way on Monday afternoon, and all our fears of enduring a tedious assignment subsided. We knew that this would be a fun, worthwhile and a memorable experience.

One person who had a realization about his position is Burnie Du Rant from Jersey City University. "Initially, I was going to use the retreat to increase my leadership skills, so I could go back to my site and be a better leader, but while at the retreat, my focus changed. It went from solely concentrating on my learning how to be a better leader to helping those around me become better leaders," Bernie explained.

Bernie and I came out with similar thoughts about the retreat. A leader needs to realize the potential in each person and help him or her bring that out. I learned this quickly when we were doing team-building exercises with the staff from Camp Ockanickon.

Our team - The Kangaroos - was challenged to complete a series of tasks from untying a human knot to walking a shaky suspension bridge over marshy land. We promptly learned that by listening to one another, talking out the solution, and encouraging each other through the difficulties - we could accomplish anything! I learned that you don't have to do everything yourself; in fact, you're not supposed to.



Another person affected by our retreat was David Bogomolny of A+ for Kids. "The retreat was about meeting other people of similar mindset who appreciated each other because they knew how much effort went into their own work," he said.

I found many people that I met inspirational. One in particular is Shayetta Daye from Urban League of Hudson County. Shay completed one year of AmeriCorps and now is serving another at a different site. She is working weekends at her former site as a volunteer but doesn't receive hours toward her current service. At the closing of our retreat, she wrote an inspiring poem which she recited by heart. Shay's words and actions are a model for all of us.

Submitted by Mandy Moore, Youth Service Corps, Asbury Park, Camp Ockanickon, Medford, NJ

VISTA VOLUNTEERS WORK IN COURTS AND WITH IMMIGRANTS

Two of the New Jersey AmeriCorps programs are helping communities in unusual ways. In one, monitoring family court sessions has led to an informal court ruling about the use of interpreters. Judges are no longer allowed to interpret what they think non-English speaking people are trying to say. The situation will now require a court-appointed interpreter.

The second project involves making documentaries on legal issues area residents are facing, that are being aired on public access television. Topics have included people's rights as tenants, AIDS/HIV resources, and grandparents as parents.

CorpsMembers at **Boat People SOS** are working with the Vietnamese community in Camden, helping to integrate refugees into society. Their focus is on "tortured survivors," women, and at-risk youth. Tortured survivors are those who were put in prison when the Communists overran Vietnam. Some have been in prison for more than 15 years.

Three Digital Divide Programs Offer Different Emphasis on Computer Training

The Digital Divide Program bridges the gap in computer technology and gives people who do not have access to computers the knowledge and opportunity to use computers. Corpsmembers are trained in computer software and hardware technology and, in turn, teach people in the community.

At **Union County College in Elizabeth**, residents over 18 receive computer training in order to get better jobs. They leave with a prepared resume when they are finished the course.

The greatest challenge, said Jackie Elkin, who oversees the five community computer centers, is keeping up with the people who want to take the classes. There are currently 1200 people on the waiting list.

There is a special software program for residents who are not fluent in English, as well as a computer repair class for those who are interested in this as a career choice.

The emphasis of the program at **The Paterson Technology Corps** is to introduce children to computer applications, according to Mark-Damon Smith, program manager. AmeriCorps members are working in seven Paterson schools.

They also partner with local community groups to organize computer literacy workshops. The group recently received computers

from United Way which Smith said will enable them to run their own training sessions and schedule their own labs. He said he hopes this will change the emphasis of the programs from the schools to the community.

Smith measures the success of the program in several ways. "Some 85% of my staff is from Paterson, young people who were not doing anything in particular with their lives," he said. "I was able to get them to come into the center and be productive. Many of the staff are now going on to college, while some have become mentors to younger students." he added.

Many of the AmeriCorps members have stories to tell. One member started out living in a local home-



degree in computer science.

The corpsmembers at **Monmouth Center Vocational Rehabilitation (MCVR)** have a range of disabilities that include physical, visual and mental. After six months of training on basic computer skills, they will begin training participants with disabilities from MCVR and from the community.

The program also reaches out to those on welfare and offers counseling and workshops ranging from anger management to music appreciation.

Special software programs are used to accommodate corpsmembers, such as JAWS, a speech-assisted program and ZOOM TEXT for those with visual impairment. A corpsmember with cerebral palsy uses a modified Track Ball, an aid for those who have difficulty using a mouse.

THERE ARE CURRENTLY 1200 PEOPLE ON THE WAITING LIST FOR COMPUTER CLASSES AT UNION COUNTY COLLEGE."

less shelter; another person had trouble with the law before joining the program. He first worked at the center on a volunteer basis to prove that he was serious about doing community service, and has since enrolled at a local community college where he is working toward a



SERVICE LEARNING: Environment, Literacy, Civic Action

Learn and Serve America: School-Based Programs provide students with a structured learning experience where they can demonstrate problem-solving and scholastic skills developed through service-learning and community-service activities.

This past year there were 12 Learn & Serve America programs in NJ. Currently there are 13. Following are highlights of past and present grantee activities:

Ocean County Vocational School District (OCVSD) Cosmetology Students participated in four days of service to the students of the Regional Day School. The success of this program and the impact that it made on the students is best described in their own words: "I learned many things working with the clients.



It showed me that by just performing a service that I learned in Cosmetology, I could brighten up someone's day," said Kathleen Chadwick.

Haddon Heights High School Students assisted members of the Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) chapter with activities this fall. Capitalizing on the idea, "The Power of Friendship," students who were studying about drug and alcohol abuse joined with SADD members in organizing a friendship tribute wall. The wall comprised photos of students and faculty members photographed with special friends, accompanied by a caption that explained why that friendship was important.

NEW RSVP DIRECTORS EAGER FOR NEW CHALLENGES

Welcome to our new RSVP directors who began their jobs this fall. They are: as follows: **Barbara Wiederecht, Bergen;** **Laura Smith, Essex/Hudson;** **Marjory Bernhard, Mercer;** **Nancy Hess, Morris;** **Mimi Figueroa, Passaic;** and **Steven Kendell, Union.** The purpose of RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) is two-fold - to engage persons 55 and older in volunteer service to meet critical community needs and to provide a high-quality experience that will enrich the lives of volunteers.

Barbara Wiederecht was director of volunteers at a hospice in Northern Jersey before coming to RSVP. In the year ahead she said she would like to educate more of the population about RSVP and the importance of seniors sharing their years of experience. She is looking forward to engaging seniors in meaningful service activities. Before coming to RSVP **Marjory Bernhard** worked at General Motors "in every department in the company." She has a Master's degree in education and an Associate degree in medical technology. One of the priorities she has undertaken is to help put in place the Mercer County VOAD, (Voluntary Organization Assisting in Disaster). The purpose of VOAD is to bring together disaster relief organizations and foster more effective service to people affected by disaster.

Nancy Hess hopes to bring the RSVP message to as many potential volunteers and nonprofit organizations as possible. "I also like to think of our organization as *Representing the Service, Value & Power* of Morris County's volunteers aged 55 and over," she said. **Mimi Figueroa** has been employed with the American Red Cross (the sponsor of the RSVP program) for three years, serving in an array of job positions across the generations' spectrum. "As a resident of Passaic County, I am sensitive to the challenges that plague our diverse senior population. I look forward to addressing those needs by integrating intergenerational opportunities within our local communities," she said. **Laura Smith** said she and her staff are looking forward to the challenges ahead and expanding "our existing program."

Mimi, Barbara, Marjory, Nancy, Laura, and Steven, we wish you good luck in your new positions and continued success in the year ahead.

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